

# The Commissioner's REPORT

New Jersey  
Transportation  
Highlights

Governor  
**James E. McGreevey**

September 2002

Commissioner  
**Jamie Fox**

Governor McGreevey has asked me to implement his vision of a Department that is efficient and committed to smart growth. Communicating with the citizens of New Jersey on a regular basis is an integral part of sharing this vision. The Commissioner's Report, a monthly newsletter, will highlight the Department's pledge to serve the transportation needs in your communities and throughout the state. New Jerseyans deserve a better quality of life, ensured by an effective transportation network. I hope this newsletter is helpful to you.

Commissioner Jamie Fox

## News briefs

**NJDOT's 'Fix It First' projects address congestion and safety**

See page 2

**NJDOT awards \$14.3 million to municipalities for non-traditional transportation projects**

See page 2

**'Fix DMV' Commission issues interim report highlighting need for secure facilities and documents**

See page 3

**McGreevey Administration begins to correct E-ZPass problems**

See page 3

**New contract to provide relief for users of Parkway's Driscoll Bridge**

See back page

## Helpful Numbers

See page 2



Governor Jim McGreevey visited the Route 1/130 construction site in North Brunswick. The heavily traveled intersection has been redesigned to improve safety and alleviate congestion.

## Easing your commute

### NJDOT's 'Fix It First' projects address congestion and safety

Reducing congestion and improving safety on all of the state's roads are the foremost transportation priorities of the McGreevey Administration.

To accomplish this in a way that meaningfully addresses the causes of congestion, improves driving conditions and continues to enhance economic well-being for New Jersey residents, the New Jersey Department of Transportation will focus its limited resources on maintaining and fixing an aging transportation infrastructure.

Within the last few weeks, Commissioner Fox announced projects that specifically address congestion relief and safety. They include:

- Route 71 pedestrian tunnel, West Long Branch.

## Making communities livable

### NJDOT awards \$14.3 million to municipalities for non-traditional transportation projects

The New Jersey Department of Transportation recently awarded \$14.3 million in transportation enhancement grants funded through the federal Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21).

While quality of life is an important value of New Jersey residents, the criteria that define it varies from community to community. Smart growth transportation planning not only improves mobility and bolsters the economy; it also improves our quality of life. These 44 grants are for projects formulated at the local level to assist New Jersey towns and counties that meet these goals.

The Transportation Enhancement program links

This \$4 million federally funded project separates pedestrian and vehicular traffic and allows pedestrians to safely cross Route 71 on the campus of Monmouth University.

- **Route 46 and Riverview Drive, Totowa.** NJDOT, at the urging of Congressman Bill Pascrell, Jr., has accelerated the work schedule on this \$18 million congestion relief project by six months. The Riverview Drive bridge over Route 46 is being widened to improve traffic flow at a heavily traveled interchange.

- **Route 18 and Tices Lane, East Brunswick.** \$3 million has been committed to East Brunswick to improve a chronically congested part of Route 18 travelled by 58,000 vehicles daily.

state and federal policy and ensures that these projects are an integral part of our transportation investment policy. Transportation initiatives must include consideration of their natural environment as well as the characteristics of surrounding communities.

Enhancement grants typically fund non-traditional transportation projects, including the creation of bicycling and pedestrian trails, restoration of historic canals, historic train station rehabilitation and aesthetic conveniences and improvements to downtown streets.

A full list of the projects can be found on <http://www.state.nj.us/transportation/lgs/fy2002allotments.htm>

## Helpful Numbers

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## 'Fix DMV': Heightened Security and Service

### Fix DMV Commission issues an interim report highlighting need for secure facilities and documents

Governor James E. McGreevey established the "Fix DMV" Commission and appointed Commissioner Jamie Fox to lead it. In August, the Commission, which includes distinguished members from state government and the private sector, issued an interim report and made recommendations that are the first steps toward modernizing New Jersey's Division of Motor Vehicles. The report can be found on <http://www.state.nj.us/mvs/interimreport.pdf>. The Commission will issue an in-depth report addressing technology and modernization followed by a final report due in early October. This will include comprehensive recommendations that will focus on creating an organization with resources and safeguards for security and integrity of facilities and documents and the ability to revamp the Division of Motor Vehicles into a modern, secure and customer-oriented agency.

The interim report followed an extensive hearing in July at which hundreds of citizens candidly offered testimony or wrote in about their experiences at DMV agencies.

Much of the testimony and comments given to the Commission was extremely blunt. One citizen witnessed "clerks verbally harassing customers, bordering on abuse." Another, quite graphically, said a visit to a DMV agency was akin to "the Bataan Death March."

"My own personal experience in obtaining a New Jersey driver license was wholly unsatisfactory," said Commissioner Fox.

### Fixing E-ZPass problems

### McGreevey Administration begins to correct E-ZPass problems

One of the first major assignments Governor James E. McGreevey gave to Transportation Commissioner Jamie Fox was to find out how to solve the problems plaguing New Jersey's electronic toll collection system. Governor McGreevey has made it clear that he will tolerate nothing less than an efficient and accountable system.

While E-ZPass has eased bottlenecks at toll plazas, reducing traffic congestion and helping to improve air quality, the system requires a complete managerial and financial overhaul.

A recently released report from a study group that was chaired by Commissioner Fox identified several manageable solutions to steer E-ZPass back on a course to financial stability and quality customer service. The full E-ZPass report can be found on <http://www.state.nj.us/transportation/ezpass.pdf>. One of the first recommendations implemented was hiring ACS State and Local Government Solutions to replace WorldCom as the primary project contractor. ACS is a recognized national leader in electronic toll collection systems with an effective track record of operating systems in New York, California, Maryland, Delaware and South Carolina.

In terminating the state's contract with WorldCom, New Jersey has taken the first critical steps toward ending a steady stream of nuisance violation notices and account balance disputes and making E-ZPass the complete success it should

While the Fix DMV Commission is continuing its deliberations on structural, financial and operational reforms, recurring customer service and security lapses required the Commission to respond quickly.

The consensus of the Commission is that the DMV's structure must change along with its business practices and technology. In addition, a steady source of funding for the DMV must be identified if we are to implement meaningful reform. Governor McGreevey's current budget includes an additional \$7 million for agency modernization.

New Jersey has unfortunately earned a national reputation for motor vehicle documents, especially licenses and titles, which can be illegally reproduced or tampered with easily. This jeopardizes our personal and national security.

The state is moving quickly to implement a digitized driver license that will all but eliminate tampering and fraud. The digitized license is an improvement over the current photo license because the image of the motorist cannot be altered without destroying the license itself and additional driver information can be encoded on a bar code or magnetic strip. One of the interim recommendations is to award a contract to implement this badly needed program by early 2003.

have been from the start.

The state is finalizing plans to install high speed E-ZPass on the Garden State Parkway. This will enable motorists to drive at highway speeds through E-ZPass lanes. It is already utilized in several states and is needed on a busy road like the Parkway. In response to complaints from motorists' steps will be taken to improve lane identification and signage.

In addition to recurring operational problems, E-ZPass is on the verge of bankruptcy. The financial scheme put in place by the previous administration was not sound. It was not only supposed to pay for the installation and operation of the system, it was going to generate \$34 million in excess revenue. Instead of turning a profit, E-ZPass is mired with a \$469 million deficit.

To begin to pay down the debt, a monthly fee of \$1 per account will be instituted. This fee will be dedicated to reducing the E-ZPass debt and instituting improvements such as high speed E-ZPass. In addition, the two-cent and nickel discounts on the Garden State Parkway have been eliminated because they were not having enough impact on reducing congestion to justify its annual cost of \$13 million. Discounts on the Turnpike and the Atlantic City Expressway will remain in place.



## Easing the commute

### New contract to provide relief for users of Parkway's Driscoll Bridge

Governor McGreevey announced the award of an \$84 million construction contract to PKF-Mark III, Inc. of Newtown, PA to build a new bridge beside the existing span of the Driscoll Bridge that carries the Garden State Parkway over the Raritan River.

A second contract for inspecting and coordinating construction of the new bridge and approaches was awarded to DMJM & Harris of Iselin for \$9.5 million. The older span will be fully refurbished.

The final cost for the bridges is \$230 million. When all phases of the project are completed, the Driscoll Bridge will carry eight full size travel lanes northbound, seven lanes southbound with shoulders in each direction, up from six narrow travel lanes in each direction with no shoulders. The project is expected to be completed by 2005.

The Governor said the actions mark the "beginning of a long-awaited project to provide relief to the hundreds of thousands of New Jersey drivers who cross the Driscoll Bridge every day."

"It also clearly demonstrates the value of Project Labor Agreements in saving taxpayer dollars – in this instance nearly \$25 million in savings that can now be spent on other vital maintenance projects to the state's transportation infrastructure," he said.

More than 80 million vehicles a year travel to and from the northern part of the state to points south along the Jersey Shore. This major commuter and tourism artery is in need of major repairs and the scene of acute congestion. A quarter of those cars use the bridge to access the Turnpike.

In April, Governor McGreevey announced an historic and unprecedented interagency agreement between the New Jersey Highway Authority and the New Jersey Turnpike Authority wherein the Turnpike would contribute approximately \$135 million to pay for the reconstruction of the bridge.

The Highway Authority, which operates the Parkway, will provide approximately \$40 million.

The Driscoll Bridge carries six narrow travel lanes each northbound and southbound with no shoulders. The structure is both structurally deficient and functionally obsolete. The deck of the existing northbound bridge has severely deteriorated and is in need of replacement. Pieces of concrete have been fallen on the ground below and holes have appeared in the deck of the bridge.

The bridge is named for Governor Alfred E. Driscoll who was at the helm of New Jersey state government when the first cars began using the New Jersey Turnpike and when the shovels went into the ground to build the Garden State Parkway.